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AUTHOR Gillis, Lynette; Spears, George
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ABSTRACT

As part of a research program designed to facilitate the development of innovative television programing as well as programing that reaches unserved or underserved audiences, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting commissioned an evaluation of one 30-minute episode of the dramatic series, "Oye Willie," which features a Puerto Rican American family living in New York City. The study assessed the level of interest in the program of 13 adolescent and 38 adult Hispanic-American viewers and of 23 members of the general audience. Data were collected through focus group discussions, questionnaires, and the Program Evaluation Analysis Computer (PEAC), which monitors viewers' moment-to-moment responses to a program. Overall response to the show was positive. The adolescent Hispanic group was very satisfied with the program as it was. However, the two adult groups expressed diverging concerns--the Hispanics reported that the program did not go far enough in providing positive role models for those experiencing integration, while the general audience suggested that the program did not do enough to satisfy their desire for information about traditional Hispanic culture. (FL)

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PEAC ANALYSIS
of
OYE WILLIE

Conducted for

THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Washington, D.C.

Report prepared by:
Lynette Gillis
George Spears, Ph.D.

February, 1981

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PREFACE

During the past few years, the Office of Communication Research (OCR) at CPB has assumed the responsibility of conducting research which would facilitate the development of innovative programming in general as well as programming which would target the "unserved" or "underserved" audiences.

In support of the latter task, OCR conducted an evaluation of a 30-minute pilot from the proposed series, *Oye Willie*. The evaluation which follows was conducted to assess interest in the program among both adolescent and adult Hispanics and general audiences. It also examined viewers' perceptions of production quality, the portrayal of the Puerto Rican community and the treatment of the program topic.

The data were acquired using focus group discussions, questionnaires, and the Program Evaluation Analysis Computer (PEAC) which monitors viewers' moment-to-moment response to a program. PEAC viewer data are retained in individual, hand-held units until the program is over, then they are transferred to a larger microcomputer for analysis and storage.

Overall, response to the program was positive with the adolescent group displaying the highest level of interest throughout the program. The adult groups had some specific suggestions for improvement. For instance, the general audience would like the program to provide more information on the unique aspects of life in the Hispanic-American community. The Hispanic adults would like to see a wider variety of Hispanic peoples represented in a wider range of lifestyles as well as portrayals of characters who are successfully integrating into the mainstream of American society.

We hope you will find this report informative and useful. It is our hope, also, that in a cumulative way, such studies as the following will add to the body of knowledge which may serve to improve the quality of "special" and "targeted" programming in public broadcasting.

Howard A. Myrick, Ph.D.
Director
Office of Communication Research

SUMMARY

This report describes the evaluation by PEAC Developments of one 30-minute program in the new series *Oye Willie*. The series follows the adventures of a ten-year-old Puerto Rican boy named Willie. In "Golden Boy", the program tested, Willie's family hears a rumor that their son's playground coach is homosexual. As the family confronts and resolves this initially threatening situation, the program seeks to provide insight into the Latin family and community.

The research assessed the level of interest in the program of adolescent and adult Latin viewers, and of members of the general public. It also examined viewers' perceptions of production quality, the portrayal of the Puerto Rican community, and the treatment of the program topic.

The evaluation was conducted with an adolescent Hispanic audience of 13 viewers, an adult Hispanic audience of 38 viewers, and a general audience of 23. The three test sessions took place at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in Washington, D.C. Data were acquired through focus group discussions, questionnaires, and the Program Evaluation Analysis Computer, which monitors viewers' moment-to-moment responses to television programming.

The three test groups accepted *Oye Willie* as a competently produced family drama in much the same mould as others on commercial TV, for example *The White Shadow*. Overall, response to the program was positive. Interest was high throughout the program for the adolescent group, and just slightly lower for the general audience. The Hispanic adults were largely neutral toward the program for the first 15 minutes, but their interest increased when interactions within Willie's family became the focus of the program. Of the total sample, 74 percent rated the program as good or excellent, and 77 percent stated that they would view it at least occasionally at home.

Although the test groups found the program acceptable in terms of both production quality and message content, the data of the two adult groups suggested improvements. The general audience would like the program to provide more information than it presently does on the unique aspects of life in a traditional Hispanic-American community. They see the program as an opportunity to learn more about Hispanic peoples, and greater attention to details of the physical environment, to patterns of social interaction, and to culturally significant images would largely satisfy these wishes. The Hispanic adults expressed two important concerns about the program's portrayal of their culture. To present an accurate picture of Latin culture to the American public, they would like to see a wider variety of Hispanic peoples represented in a wider range of socio-economic levels and lifestyles. Secondly, as an expression of the aspiration of many Hispanics, they suggest portraying characters who are successfully integrating into the mainstream of American society.

Oye Willie does contain elements that both adult audience groups wish to see expanded; to improve the program requires presenting these more forcefully.

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the evaluation of one 30-minute program from the dramatic series *Oye Willie*. The series centers on the adventures of a ten-year-old, Puerto Rican-American boy named Willie. At the outset of this program, Willie's family hears rumors that their son's playground coach is a homosexual. Acting out of fear and anger, the parents' first reaction is to protect their son from possible harm. They forbid Willie to see the coach again, overlooking his good character and the positive influence he has on Willie. The hostile feelings of the parents dissipate, however, as, in the course of the story, they examine their own prejudices and rediscover tolerance for those who are different. The program attempts to provide an accurate portrayal of the Latin family and community.

The evaluation was conducted to assess interest in the program in both Hispanic and general audiences. The evaluation also examined viewers' perceptions of a number of specific issues, including the quality of the production, the portrayal of Latin life, and the program's treatment of the controversial topic of homosexuality. The data were acquired using focus group discussions, questionnaires, and the Program Evaluation Analysis Computer, which monitors viewers' moment-to-moment response to a program. After a brief description of the procedure, the results of the evalution are presented and then discussed with recommendations for future programs.

PEAC EVALUATION

The PEAC is a device that allows each member of a test audience to record his or her second-by-second response to a TV program while the program is in progress. Viewers can also record the occurrence of discrete events, such as occasions when production techniques are remarkably good or bad, and they can answer multiple-choice questions posed by the researcher. The data that each viewer provides are retained in individual, hand-held units until the program is over, when they are transferred to a larger microcomputer for analysis and permanent storage.

The purpose of the present test was to obtain three types of information. While viewing, members of the audience continuously registered their interest in the program. After viewing, they answered a number of questions about the program, and provided basic demographic information. The session concluded with a group discussion. The program was tested with three audience groups: Hispanic parents and Hispanic adolescents constituted the primary target groups and a general viewing audience made up the secondary target.

Subjects

House Market Research, a Maryland-based firm, recruited three audiences for the evaluation in Washington, D.C. The Hispanic parent audience consisted of 38 people, the adolescent Hispanic audience of 17 people, and the general viewing audience of 23. All test sessions were conducted at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in Washington, D.C.

Procedure

The test procedure was the same for each session. Viewers were seated in a semi-circle facing a 23-inch color TV. The researchers introduced themselves and explained that the viewers would see a 30-minute drama program. No additional information was given about the content of the program. The use of the PEAC response units was explained. Viewers were instructed to use a four-point scale (keys A, B, C, D) to record their interest in the program. They were asked to press an appropriate key whenever the program became more or less interesting, and were encouraged to respond regularly, several times a minute.

A larger poster showing the response options was placed near the TV set:

A Very boring
B Boring
C Interesting
D Very Interesting

After viewing the program, the audience answered questions about the program content and personal statistics (age, sex, etc.). Viewers answered each question by pushing the response unit key that corresponded to their chosen option for the question. Following this, the group adjourned to discuss the program with a researcher. Refreshments were served at the conclusion. Adult viewers were reimbursed $15.00 for their time and adolescent viewers were paid $10.00.

Three test sessions were conducted, one with each viewing audience.

The sampling rate of the response units was set at ten seconds, that is, one data entry was logged on each unit every ten seconds. The 30-minute program contains 170 sampling intervals.

RESULTS

Sample

The distribution of viewers by age and by sex in each of the test audiences is shown in Tables 1 and 2. Approximately half the total group reported viewing more than two hours of public television during an average week. Table 3 reports the hours of public television viewed weekly by respondents in each of the three test audiences.

Table 1. Sex of Respondents in Three Test Audiences

Audience	Proportion of Males	Proportion of Females	
	Percent	Percent	
Adolescent	85	15	(n = 13)
General	74	26	(n = 23)
Latin	25	75	(n = 17)

Table 2. Age of Respondents in Three Test Audiences

Age	Adolescent	General	Latin
	Percent	Percent	Percent
18 and under	62	14	0
19—35	31	64	44
36 and over	8*	23	56
	100	100	100
	(n = 13)	(n = 22)	(n = 16)

**missing data*

Table 3. Number of Hours of PBS Television Viewed Weekly by Respondents in Three Test Audiences

Number of Hours Viewed in an Average Week	Adolescent	General	Latin	Total
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
None	46	4	6	15
Less than 1 hour	15	9	6	10
1 hour per week	15	22	13	17
2-3 hours per week	0	13	31	15
More than 3 hours per week	23	43	38	37
Don't know	0	9	6	6
	100 (n = 13)	100 (n = 23)	100 (n = 16)	100 (n = 52)

Interest in the Program

Interest level data were cumulated across sampling intervals, that is, each response that a person made was considered to remain valid until a new response was made. Although a viewer did not respond during each ten-second interval, the data for empty intervals were filled to form an unbroken set.

The response of the three audience groups to *Oye Willie* appears in Profile 1 (see Profile at end of text). The profile designates the mean response of adolescent, general, and Hispanic audiences at each ten-second interval of the program. The rating scale, at the top of the profile, ranges from 11.0 (I find the program very boring) to 14.0 (I find the program very interesting). The time points appear at the margins; each represents ten seconds of program time.

As seen in Profile 1, the three audiences differ consistently in their response to the program. The adolescent audience displays the greatest interest and the Hispanic parent audience the least.

It should be noted that the tape used in the test sessions contained a fault in the audio track; there was essentially no sound for about two minutes following the disco scene (time points 44 to 55). Interest levels fall sharply because of this for the adolescent and general audience groups, recovering when the sound returns.

Throughout the program, the response of the adolescent audience ranged from "interesting" to "very interesting". They found the ending to be exceptionally appealing. The general audience, however, was more neutral. They tended to judge the first five minutes as interesting, but their interest declined somewhat as the story unfolded. As seen in the profile, the general audience remained neutral in response to the action scenes but found later scenes, which involved character introspection and family interaction, more engaging.

Of the three audiences, the adult Hispanic audience expressed the least interest in the program. The profile suggests that their interest declined after the first four or five minutes when they began to judge the program as "boring". During the latter parts of the swimming pool scene, where Willie's father became more assertive in protecting his son, the audience regained interest. It remains relatively high for the next eight minutes, while Frank continues to act decisively, but decreases from time point 132, where Frank begins to doubt his assessment of Jimmy.

As illustrated in Profile 2 (see Profile at end of text), males and females showed a similar pattern of response to the program. Males, however, appeared slightly more interested, particularly when the character Inez was introduced.

Regular PBS viewers, defined as those who view more than three hours of PBS programming weekly, exhibit a slightly lower level of interest than other viewers for much of the program (Profile 3 at end of text). Regular viewers' overall assessment of program quality was also significantly lower than that of other viewers (Chi squared 10.6 with 3 df).

Quality of the Production

Respondents were asked to consider the story line, the acting, and the characters, in an overall judgment of program quality (Table 4). The three groups did not differ significantly in their ratings (Chi squared = 8.21 with 6 df). The adolescent group tended to judge the program as excellent (62 percent) or good (31 percent). The adult Latin group was divided in their perceptions: 35 percent indicated it was excellent and 35 percent judged it as good. The general audience rated it as good (52 percent) or fair (26 percent).

Table 4. Rating of Production Quality by Three Test Audiences

Rating	Adolescent	General	Latin	Total
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Excellent	62	13	35	32
Good	31	52	35	42
Fair	8	26	12	17
Poor	0	9	18	9
	100	100	100	100
	(n = 13)	(n = 23)	(n = 17)	(n = 53)

Comments made by the test audience during the discussion sessions corroborated these findings. The majority saw the program as an engaging story that was appropriate for family viewing. The consensus of the three groups was that the program appeared similar to other commercial programs although it had a more substantial message. It was frequently compared to *The White Shadow*.

In the discussion, the general audience agreed that Frank's story about "Lally Sally" was particularly intriguing. They became interested in the emotional change in the father, and felt the scene added depth to his character. Many felt that the program would have benefitted from more scenes such as this, in which the feelings and motivations of characters were explored. They expressed similar interest in the scenes portraying positive family interaction.

Respondents were also asked how often they would view the program at home. Their answers to this question were consistent with their interest profile data. As seen in Table 5, the majority of the adolescent group (77 percent) would view "as often as possible". The adult audiences were somewhat less enthusiastic: 35 percent would view "as often as possible" and 35 percent would "sometimes" view.

Table 5. Interested in Viewing OYE WILLIE at Home

Response	Audience			Total
	Adolescent	General	Latin	
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
I would view as often as possible	77	35	35	45
I would sometimes view the program	23	35	35	32
I would never view the program	0	30	29	23
	100	100	100	100
	(n = 13)	(n = 23)	(n = 17)	(n = 53)

The Portrayal of Life in a Puerto Rican Community

All the test groups were asked whether the program had accurately portrayed life in a Puerto Rican community. Overall, the respondents perceived the program as presenting an "accurate" (43 percent) or "very accurate" (40 percent) image of Puerto Rican life. Table 6 reports the response of the viewers in the three audience groups. The response of the three groups are not statistically different (Chi squared = 8.54 with 6 df). Interestingly, the two Hispanic groups rated the program's accuracy more highly than the general audience. Responses to this question must be qualified, however, by several very important points raised in the discussion sessions.

Table 6. Audience Perception of the Portrayal of Life in Puerto Rican Community

	Audience			
	Adolescent	General	Adult	Total
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Very accurate	62	17	53	40
Accurate	23	61	35	43
Inaccurate	8	22	12	15
Very inaccurate	8	0	0	2
	100	100	100	100
	(n = 13)	(n = 23)	(n = 17)	(n = 53)

The audiences perceived the portrayal of Puerto Rican life as being "accurate", but only accurate with respect to Puerto Rican communities in New York City. Even as a portrayal of life in a New York Puerto Rican community, they felt the program had not gone far enough. The toughness of life in these communities had been underplayed. The portrayal was not seen as "inaccurate" but simply as too mild a rendition. The consensus was that the New York communities represent only a small pa" of Hispanic culture. The Hispanic groups particularly contended that the New York communities were not necessarily representative lifestyles in the majority of Puerto Rican-American communities. Others carried the argument further, maintaining that the program should not portray an insular Puerto Rican community but a community of diverse Hispanic peoples. There was a very strong feeling that the program should present the broader picture of Latin culture rather than focus narrowly on one Hispanic group.

As an extension of this argument, many also felt that the series should portray the Latin community as less isolated from the rest of the world. They suggested that scenes be included to depict the interaction of the Latin community with other communities.

The Latin audiences, in particular, felt that the negative elements in *Oye Willie*, (e.g. Inez and her friends, the poor neighborhood), ought to have been balanced with more examples of the positive contributions of Latin culture to American life. The Latin audience, for instance, appreciated the depiction of Willie's family as being strong, close knit, and supportive.

The general audience were less inclined to defend the portrayal of Latin culture, but indicated that they would have liked more detailed information on the Latin experience. Some suggested that the program might be more instructive if it showed more of the culture, for example details of music, physical environment, and typical patterns of family interaction.

Understanding the Message

The audiences were asked what message the program conveyed about homosexuality. As seen in Table 7 respondents appear to have understood several different messages.

The largest proportion of both the adolescent group (54 percent) and the adult Hispanic group (41 percent) perceived a negative message: "homosexuals are a threat to the community". The general audience was more divided. Thirty-nine percent of this group perceived a negative message ("homosexuals should not be allowed to work with children"), and 30 percent perceived a more positive message ("homosexuals are okay").

Table 7. Audiences' Perception of Program Message

Message	Audience			Total
	Adolescent	General	Latin	
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Homosexuals are okay people	8	30	6	17
Homosexuals are okay if they keep to themselves	31	26	18	25
Homosexuals should not be allowed to work with children	8	39	35	30
Homosexuals are a threat to the community	54	4	41	28
	100 (n = 13)	100 (n = 23)	100 (n = 17)	100 (n = 53)

When asked to interpret the resolution of the program, the adult audiences differed from the adolescents. The majority of adults perceived the father as relieved to find out that Jimmy was not homosexual (Table 8). In contrast, the adolescents tended to believe that Frank had changed his attitude toward homosexuality.

When asked their personal opinion of homosexuality, (Table 9) the adult groups tended to express more liberal views than the adolescent group (Chi squared = 10.4 with 6 df).

Table 8. Audiences' Interpretation of the Ending

Interpretation	Audience			Total
	Adolescent	General	Latin	
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Frank changed his attitude toward homosexuality	62	5	0	24
Frank was relieved to find out that Jimmy was not homosexual	38	95	100	76
	100 (n = 13)	100 (n = 23)	100 (n = 17)	100 (n = 53)

Table 9. Audiences' Attitude Toward Homosexuality

Attitude	Audience			Total
	Adolescent	General	Latin	
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Homosexuals are okay people	0	35	18	21
Homosexuals are okay if they keep to themselves	25	30	47	35
Homosexuals should not be allowed to work with children	8	17	6	12
Homosexuals are a threat to the community	67	17	29	33
	100 (n = 12)	100 (n = 23)	100 (n = 17)	100 (n = 52)

It is of interest to note that adolescents' perceptions and general adult viewers' perceptions of the program message tended to reflect their personal attitude toward homosexuality (Chi squared = 31.36 with 9 df). Discussions with the groups after viewing the program further revealed that they had not been offended by the topic of the program. They perceived the program as suitable for family viewing and possibly as instructive for children who might be confronted with the issue. Viewers differ, however, in their perceptions of what children would learn from the program. Their perceptions differ in accordance with their own interpretation of the message.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The three test groups that participated in this evaluation accepted *Oye Willie* as a competently produced family drama program in much the same mould as others on commercial television. Overall, response to the program was positive. Although they found few overt faults in the program, the consensus of the adult viewing groups was that the program could be a considerably more forceful and informative social document. The sources of concern of the two adult groups were different, but the changes in emphasis that they suggested are compatible.

The Hispanic Group

The adult Hispanic group saw an accurate but rather limited and bloodless portrayal of their culture. A statement of their collective concerns is as follows:

The program is a relatively accurate documentary of life in a Puerto Rican barrio in New York City, but it stereotypes the majority of Latins who are not Puerto Rican, do not live in New York or in ethnic ghettos, and who are other than working class. The "West Side Story" image of Latins still lingers, and the program reinforces it. The richness and diversity in Latin culture and among different Hispanic peoples is ignored. Latins are depicted as insular and as outside the mainstream of American life.

In sum, the Hispanic audience saw a limiting portrayal of their culture and an overbalance of negative cultural images. They realized that the program did not attempt to represent the broader Latin culture in America, but disagreed with the program's goal of portraying only the New York barrio. They were concerned that Americans in general would interpret the series as a description of Latin American culture, as a whole, and thus perpetuate popular stereotypes of Latin cultures as a ghetto culture. There is thus a political element to their criticism: any program that focuses on an ethnic minority must advance the portrayal of that minority beyond popular stereotypes. This audience group proposed several constructive suggestions:

1. Include characters who represent middle class Hispanic people in the mainstream of American life.
2. Balance unsavory characters, such as Inez and her friends, with more admirable ones.
3. Show positive contributions that the Hispanic culture has provided or could provide to the larger American fabric.

The Hispanic adult group made a sharp distinction between the portrayal of the barrio culture and the portrayal of Willie's family. The family was regarded as

nearly ideal, a close knit and supportive group. Parents and children were both seen as good role models. Frank and his wife were appropriately decisive in dealing with the threat that Jimmy presented to Willie, and also sensitive to their children's needs in attempting to understand the problem in its entirety. Both the adult and teenage groups commented enthusiastically about the strong father image. The appeal profile of the parent group illustrates this point. Interest is low throughout the first half of the program, where the action focusses on the teenage crowd, but begins to rise when Frank acts to bring Willie home. It continues to rise as Frank acts assertively, forbidding Willie to associate with Jimmy. However, when Frank begins to show ambivalence, voicing doubts about his quick decisions and his assessment of the danger that Jimmy presents, appeal declines steadily.

The General Viewing Audience

This group presented only one major suggestion for improving the program. They were generally satisfied with its dramatic and entertainment value, but were slightly disappointed with the insights it provided into Puerto Rican life. Their assessment was that the dilemma of homosexuality and the moral of tolerance are universal themes, and that the program could have been made, without significant change, with Italian or Black or Norwegian actors. Their suggestions were aimed at bringing out the distinctive elements of Puerto Rican culture in order to inform the non-Puerto Rican viewer of what it means to be Puerto Rican in America today.

They contended that the value of a program set in an ethnic community is to convey the flavor of that community. They suggest that this could be achieved by directing more attention to details of the physical environment. For example, they suggested that Inez' first meeting with Jimmy could have taken place in a more uniquely Puerto Rican setting, such as a market place, rather than at an ice-cream cart which seemed less culturally significant. The graffitti on the playground walls, however, and the music in the disco conveyed a far stronger sense of Latin life.

The Adolescent Audience

The response of the adolescent group was overwhelmingly positive. They had few critical comments, but as previously mentioned, they expressed some confusion with regard to the program's position on homosexuality. They were less inclined than the adult groups to perceive a message of tolerance but more inclined to see a change of attitude in Willie's father.

In summary, the response of the test audiences to *Oye Willie* was essentially positive. Audiences perceive it as a well produced program, similar in look to

commercial programs, but with more substance. It appears that the program has the potential to attract adolescents and adults in general and Hispanic audiences. The program would have greater appeal to Hispanic groups, however, if it encompassed the larger Hispanic community rather than just the New York Puerto Rican barrio. The primary interest of the general audience was to learn more about Hispanic peoples and the problems and experiences unique to living in Hispanic cultures. Greater emphasis on the details of the physical environment, and greater attention given to culturally significant images would enhance the appeal of the program to the general viewing groups.

CONCLUSION

The picture that emerges from this evaluation is of three distinct audiences, each viewing the program from a different perspective. The adolescent Hispanic group are well satisfied with the program as it stands; no changes appear needed to assure its success. The two adult groups, however, express diverging concerns. From the point of view of the Hispanics, who are faced with the struggle of assimilation into the larger American culture, the program has not gone far enough in providing positive role models for the experience of integration. From the perspective of the general audience, the program does not do enough to satisfy their desire for information about traditional Hispanic culture.

If it is to appeal strongly to both audience groups, the program must develop in two directions, blending two divergent themes. The first is to portray the successful assimi'ation of a minority family into the mainstream of American life, and the second is to describe the life of a traditional Latin family. Audience response to *Oye Willie* suggests that the program has incorporated both themes, but has not developed either to the viewers' complete satisfaction.

Producing minority programming that will appeal to broad audiences must necessarily be a balancing act. *Oye Willie* has struck the balance, and now needs to communicate the salient issues more boldly.

OVERALL TITLE:OYE WILLIE

RESTRICTED BY QUESTION #11(GROUP)

PROFILE 1

TITLE:WILLIE
A= GROUP MEAN FOR TEEN
B= GROUP MEAN FOR GENERAL
C= GROUP MEAN FOR PARENTS

VERY BORING			BORING		INTERESTING				VERY INTERESTING	
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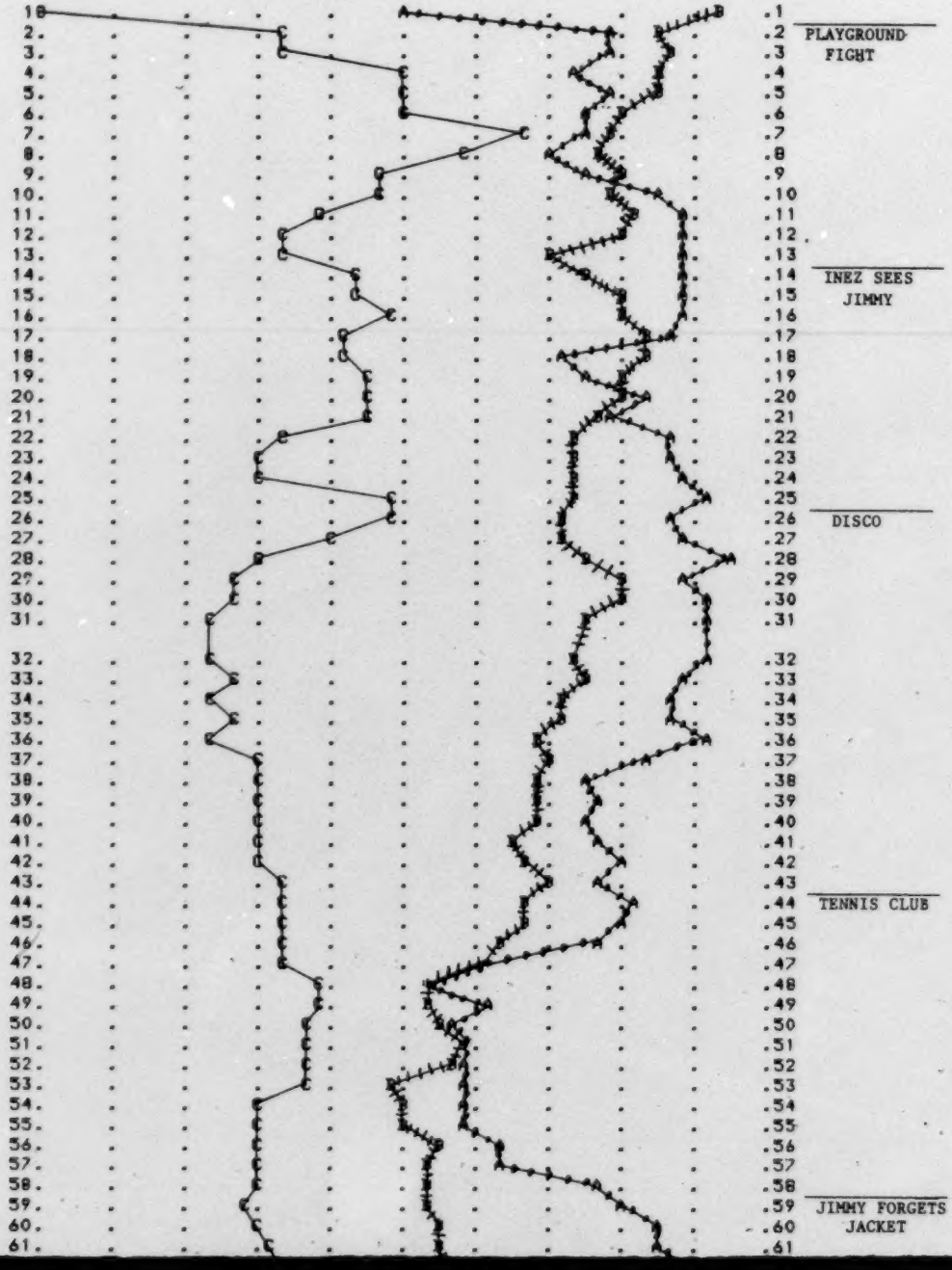

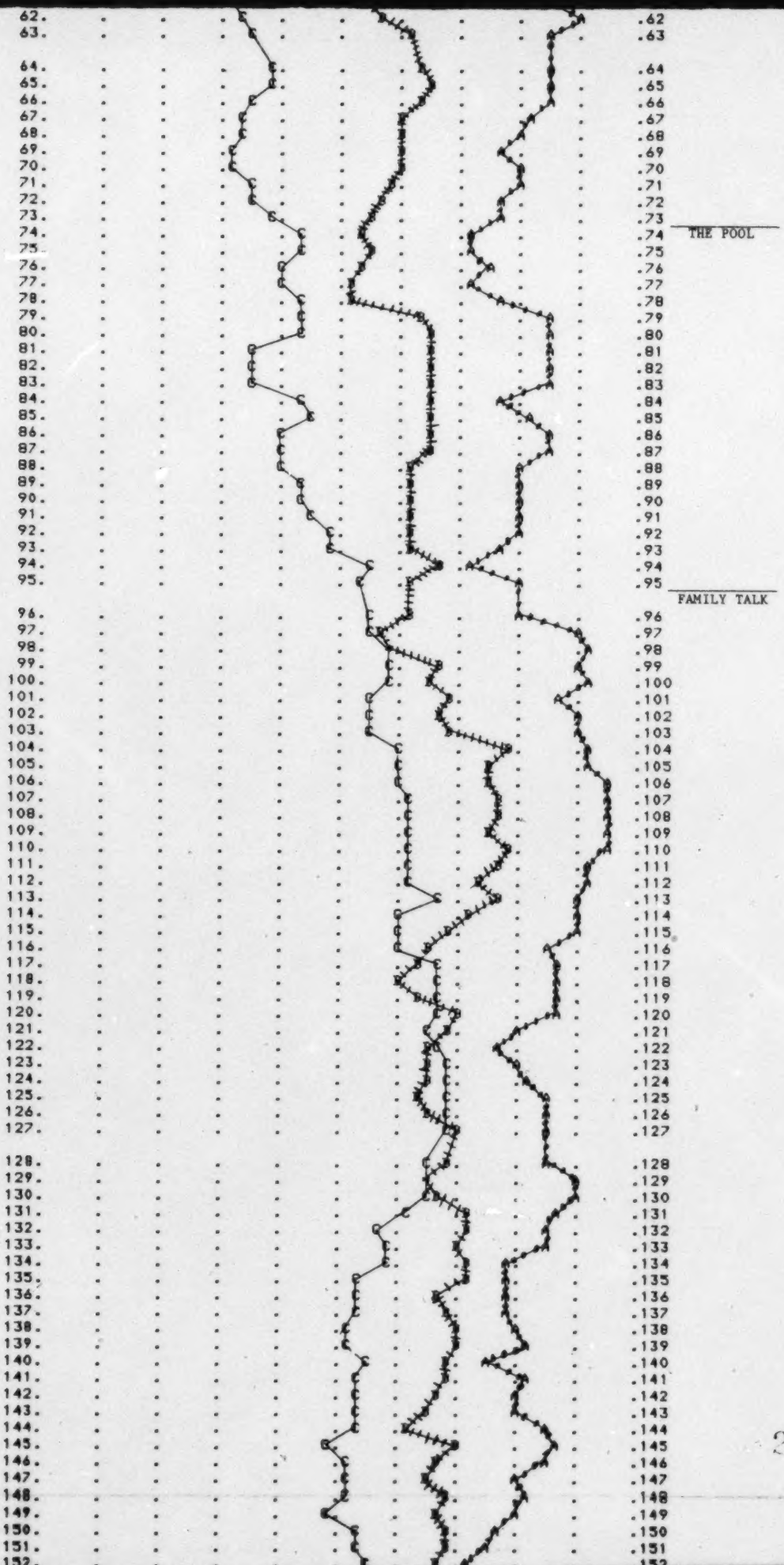
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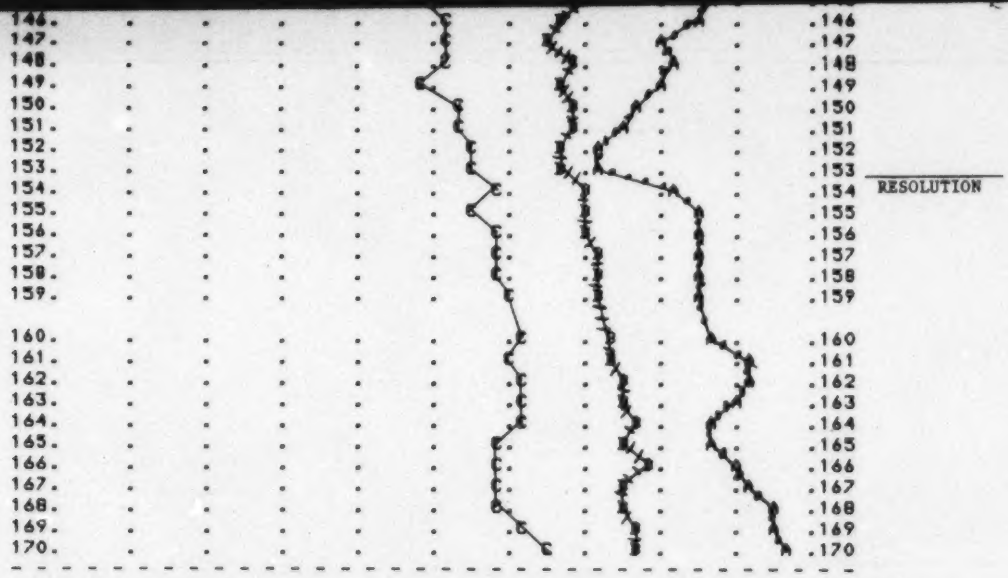
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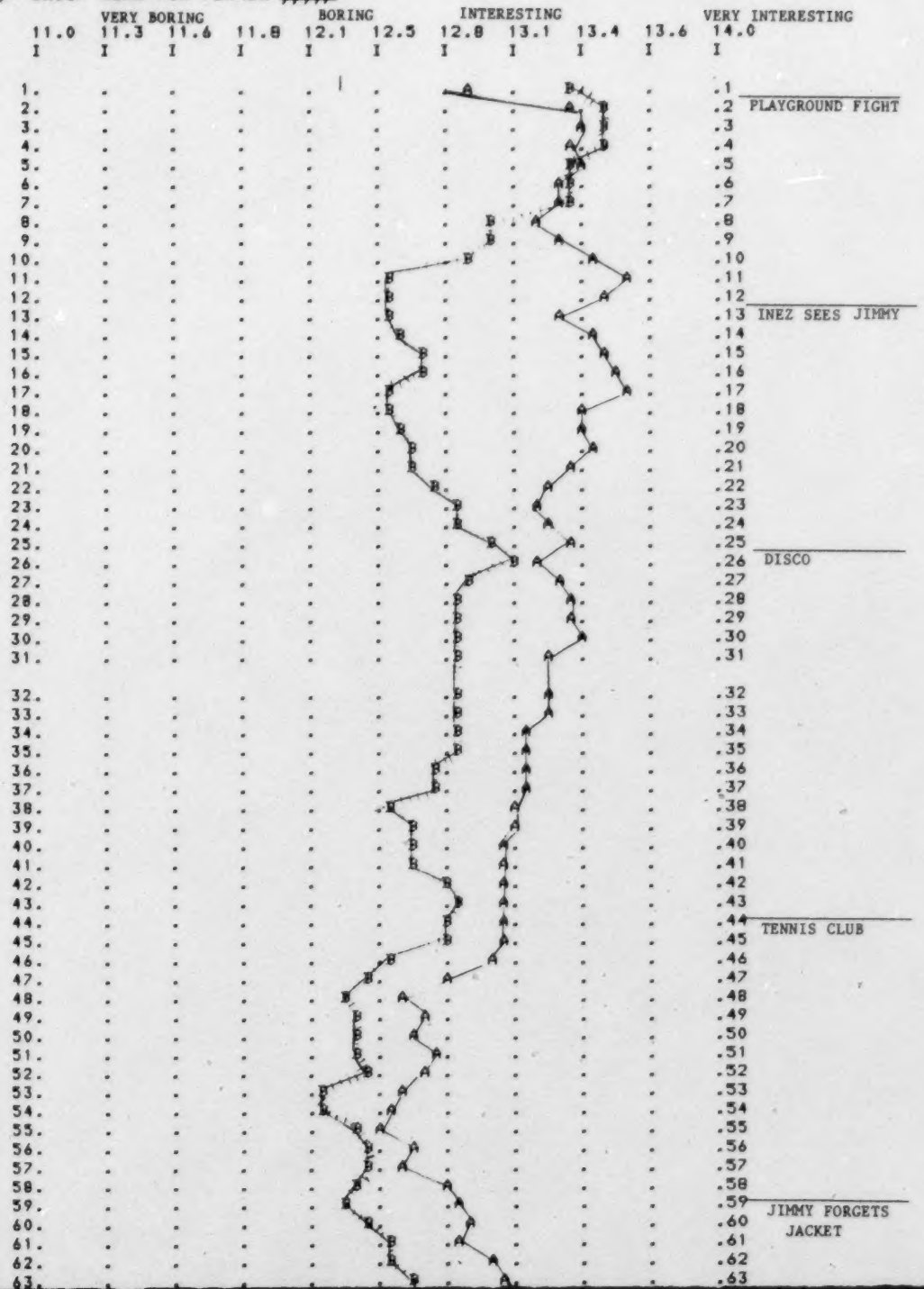
RESOLUTION

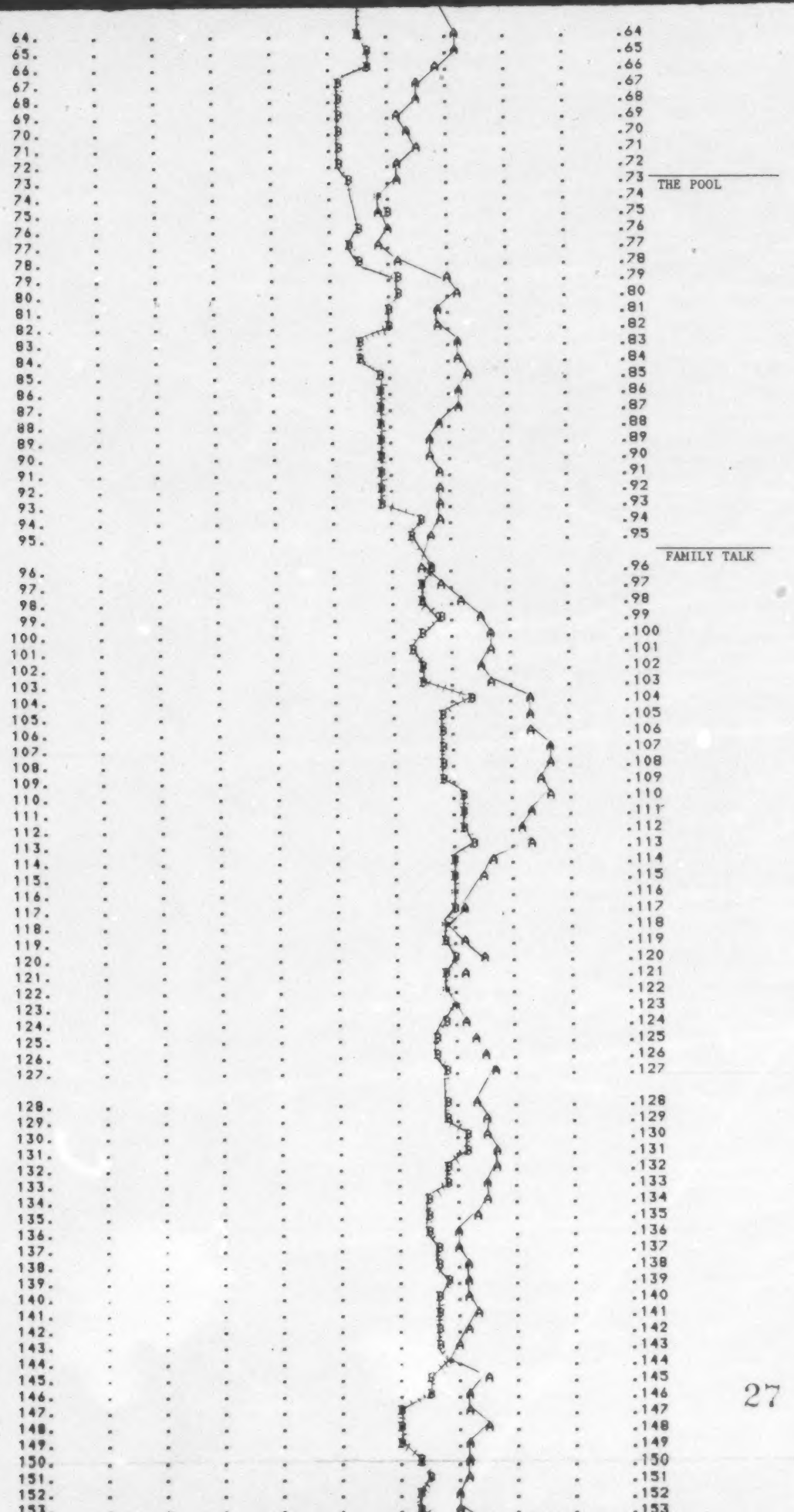
)VERALL TITLE:OYE WILLIE

RESTRICTED BY QUESTION #1(SEX)

PROFILE 2

TITLE:WILLIE
A= GROUP MEAN FOR MALE
B= GROUP MEAN FOR FEMALE

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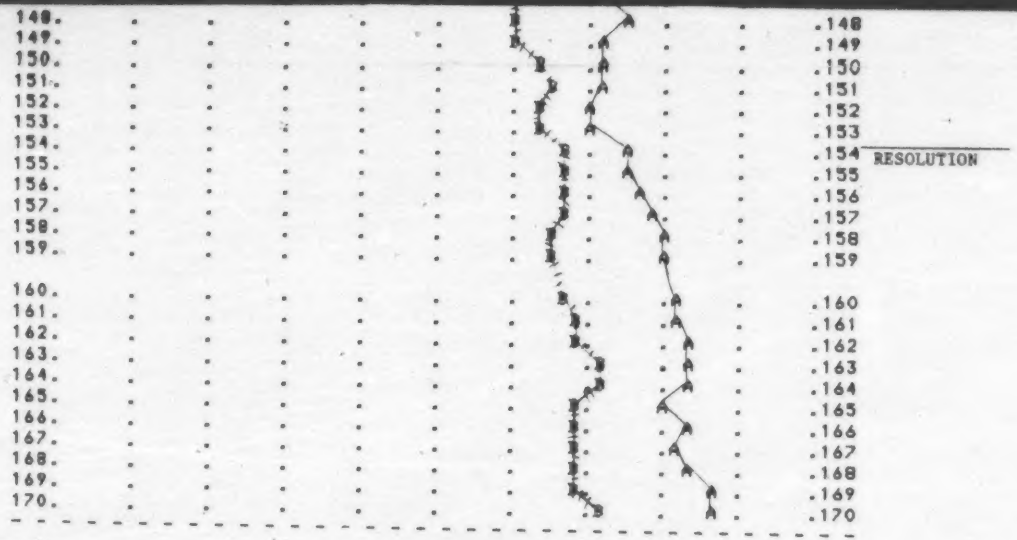
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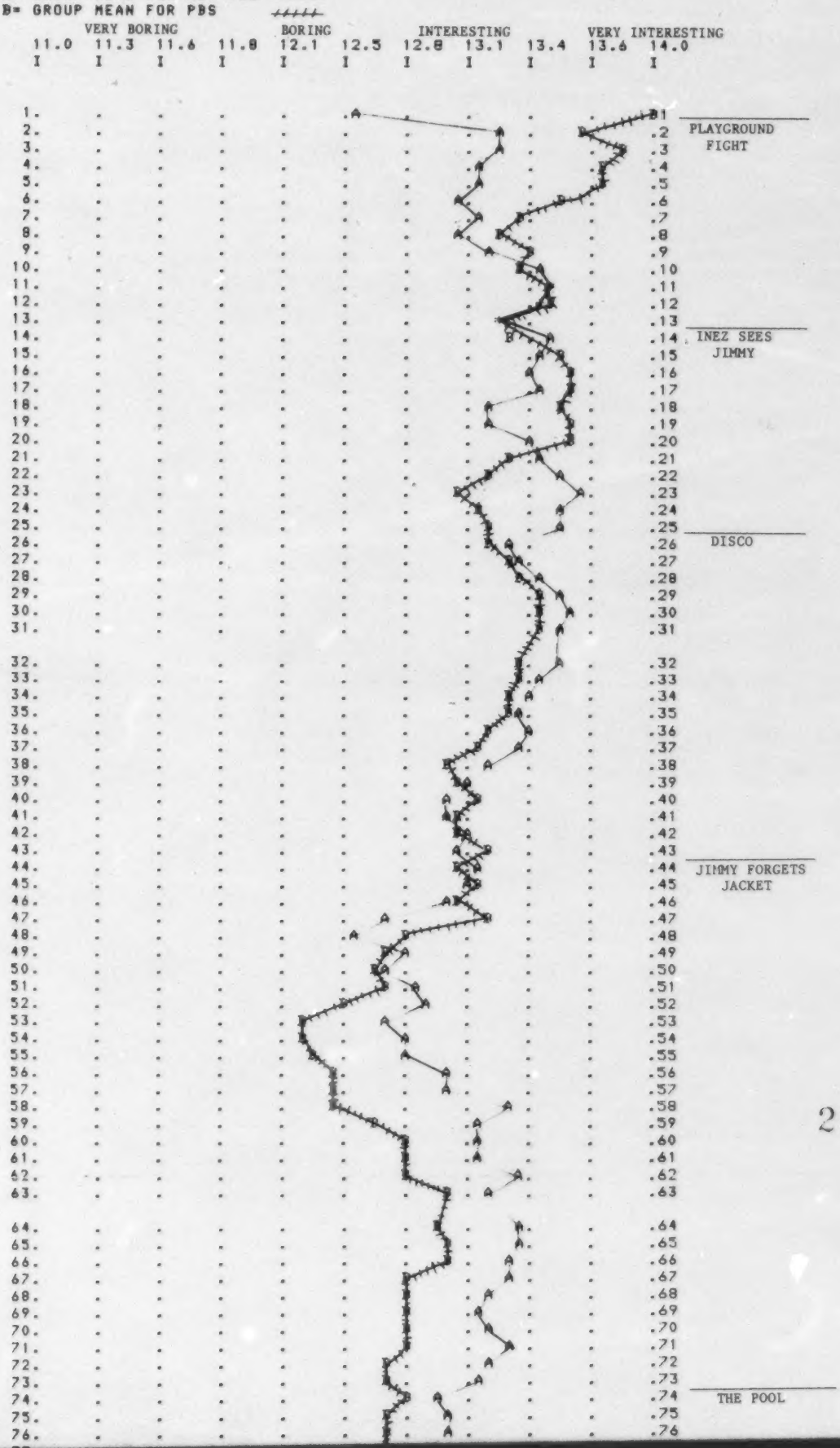
RESOLUTION

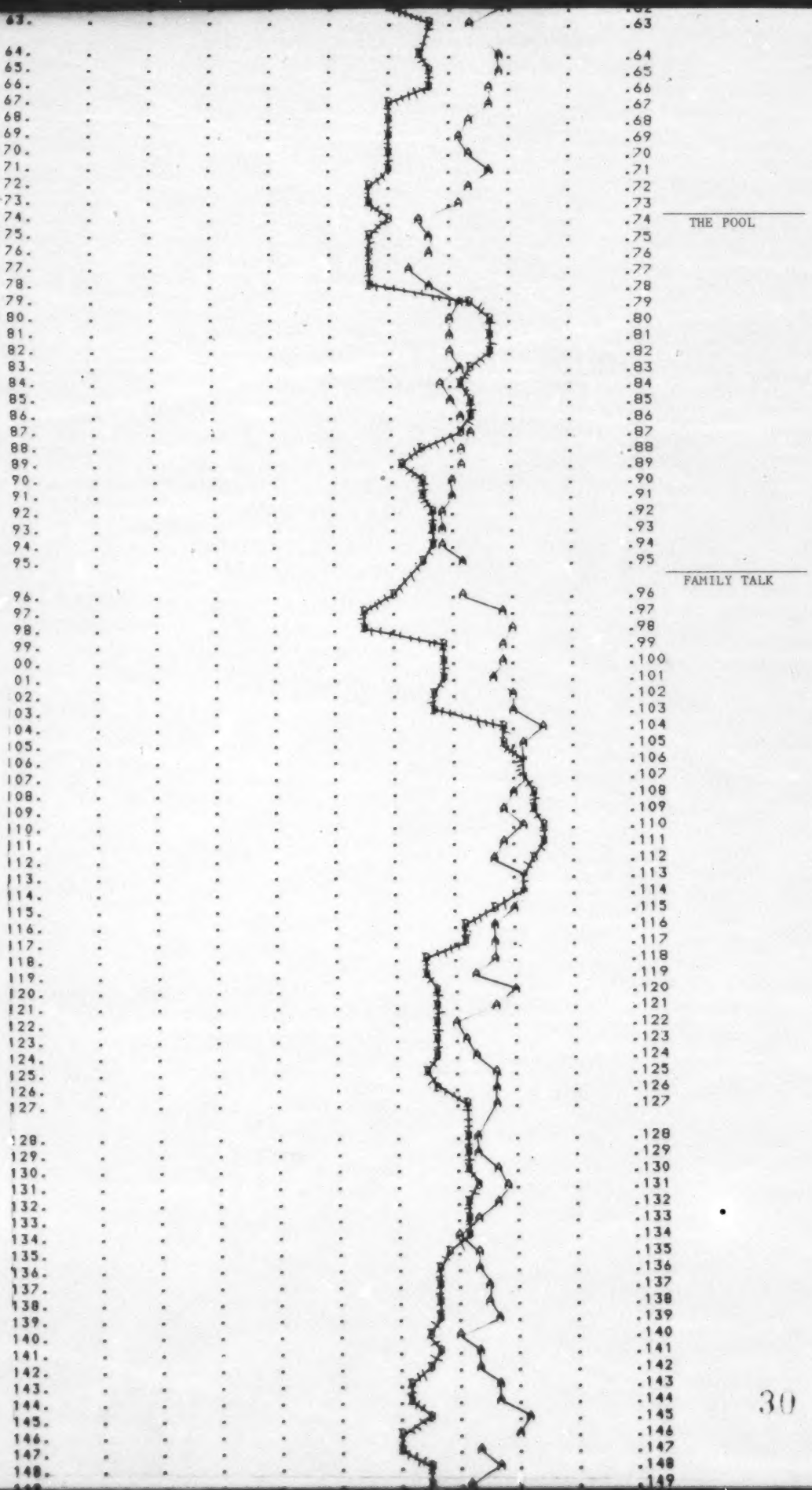
OVERALL TITLE:OYE WILLIE

RESTRICTED BY QUESTION #16(VIEWING BEHAVIOUR)

PROFILE 3

TITLE:WILLIE
A= GROUP MEAN FOR NON PBS
B= GROUP MEAN FOR PBS

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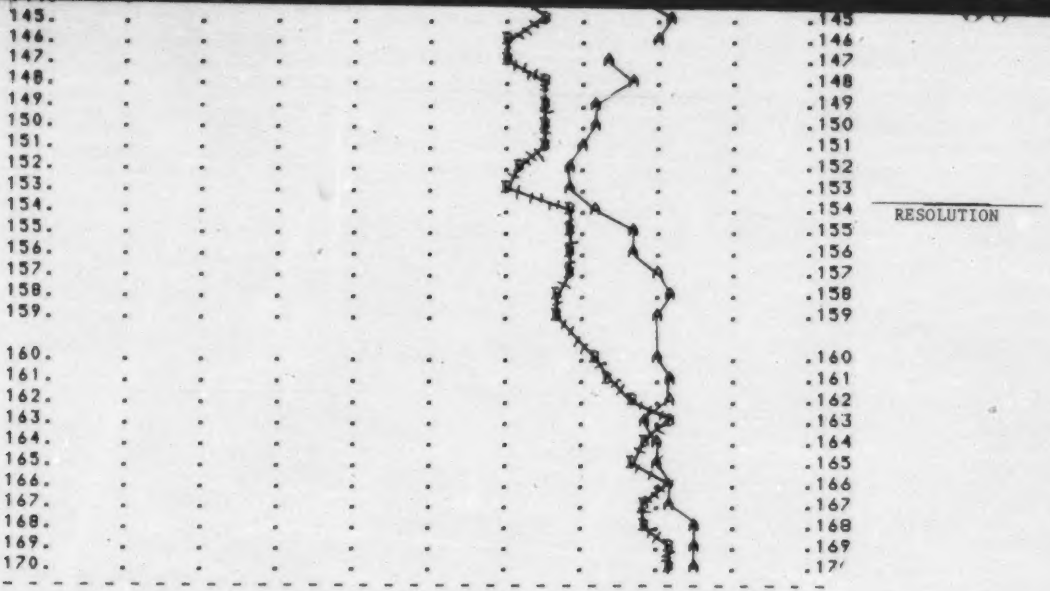
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RESOLUTION